JOHN COWPER POWYS

LETTERS TO NICHOLAS ROSS

Selected by Nicholas and Adelaide Ross

Edited by Arthur Uphill

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TO MARY ADELAIDE EDEN

'An Ancient-of-Autumns writes to his By-Blow
of Strawberry-time.'

2733

I am the Worm that feeds on the world!
WUG!
When you ask me why I can only shrug
UG!
When you talk of God I do not squirm
For the Devil's a different kind of worm,
ZUG!

Well my dear I must stop. With both our loves to you both, always your old book-worm. J.C.P.

174

July 19, 1958

That Plaque,[1] thanks be to Jehovah! lies in a beautiful white box designed especially to contain it. O it is such a comfort to us that we shan't have the effort of hanging it up anywhere. It is completely round and has on one side the three harbours of Hamburg in the form of—of, well! of three simple arches like this: (Sketch) —which was the old Hanseatic League and had nothing to do with Prussia or any other part of Germany. It was like that when I was sent to my college at Cambridge, aged 22, directly I got my B.A. degree, to lecture there on a request from Hamburg for somebody who could recite and act Shakespeare. So Hamburg was my very first public audience! O no! I don't want any honours on this side of the water. I've got past the honour-craving stage, but I do do do want you and others like you and Adelaide to get thrills of pleasure by reading my books. THAT is my greatest want-want-want, to write books that it thrills people who have the same particular interest in people and things that I have . . . . . no! no! I won't even say that! PEOPLE WHO LOVE BOOKS as I do and love reading exciting stories as I do.

[1] The Bronze Plaque of the Hamburg Free Academy of Arts was presented to John Cowper Powys on July 7th, 1958, in tribute to him as a writer and as a man. He was the third recipient of this award, the first two being Thomas Mann and the composer Frau Ilse Fromm-Michaels.

[July 24, 1958]

The only time I met Aleister Crowley was when I had to be the Speaker at a Foyle's Literary Lunch and I had him at my side and I treated him to a bottle of wine which he had finished before my speech was over! When he was cremated, our friend Louis Wilkinson of the book of Letters,[1] was the only acquaintance he possessed ready to make a speech over his coffin ere it was pushed into the flames. Have you ever seen a cremation? That final pushing of the coffin into the flames is rather a terrifying sight! I knew a man once in America who was a close and intimate friend of Crowley's and I learnt all about the 'influences' that led him on to become what he became. The chief influence of all in the direction of corruption was his reaction and revolt and rebellion against his bringing up as a child. How did his parents bring him up that made him head so desperately, by hook and by crook (that's a good popular saying for you and me to analyse) for corruption? Well, they brought him up in the religion of the Plymouth Brethren: and severely forced and compelled him to be pure and good. And the result of this compulsion was the life and ways of Aleister, the worst victim of Virtuous Parental Compulsion! But of course his intense interest, so my American friend used to explain to me, in occultism played the chief part in his corruption AFTER the Plymouth Brethren Business was long over,—the excited interest that so many very good and very nice people feel in the 'occult' is most interesting . . . . . that man HOME—it WAS HOME wasn't it?—who used at seances to go out of one window, through the air, and IN at another was a good example. But in his later years he grew weary of it and when his demons came tapping he just took not the slightest notice of them! The form of 'occultism'—if they'd call it that—which I DID admire very much in America, for I personally saw how well it worked, was Christian Science.

[1] *Letters of John Cowper Powys to Louis Wilkinson, 1935–56*, London, Macdonald, May 1958.

remembrance of that time. The paper was edged with black, as was the large envelope.

Letter 64
Bastard of my fast. An allusion to Mahatma Gandhi's fast, which was terminating at this time.

This book on the eyes. [Ross sent Powys Aldous Huxley's *The Art of Seeing*] . . . the exercises mentioned in it . . . founded on the little-known *Bates system* . . . might help to strengthen his own eyes.

The Beautiful Lady. Allusion to Franz Werfel's *The Song of Bernadette.* [Bernadette Soubiroux's name for her vision of the Virgin at Lourdes].

Letter 65
Casglu y mae efe ddwfriedd (He has collected the waters). See *Exodus* XVII.

Cardinal Spellman. [Ross had described attending a Solemn Dirge at Westminster Cathedral for a dead Cardinal at which Cardinal Spellman received the body at the West Door before it was placed on the catafalque]. I also mentioned that Spellman anointed me into the Roman Catholic Church at Boston's Holy Cross Cathedral, Whit Sunday, 1937.

'the Comet'. The new comet, *Whipples*, first discovered on December 16 [1942], visible to the naked eye, curving underneath Ursa Major. It disappeared on March 21st [1943].

WHAT a quotation. Ross had quoted from John Webster's *The White Devil*, Flamineo's lines, Act I, Scene 2: 'Thou shalt lie in a bed stuffed with turtle's feathers . . . .'

Caption to drawing. Mr. Powys becomes very violent about such things as hair, teeth and eyebrows, and very often in referring to them lapses into strong Rabelaisian words. Once he had his hair shorn and gave me a bundle of it large enough to stuff a small cushion. [*See* Letter 42].

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This brings us to the fourth and last of our items of consideration: Relation of Event to Life and to other points of view. Now what if Annalee Skarin materialises on Glastonbury Tor at Easter and says, "Now look here, boys and girls, anything I can do, you can do better"! A fatal error is to expect all the hard work to be done by a spiritual being greater than yourself. Each of us must walk alone the straight and narrow pathway into the realm of New Jerusalem where death no longer dwells. There are a lot of nice beings cheering for you, but the bottom line is this – you've got to take absolute responsibility for your own thoughts, words and actions and cease and desist forever from blaming others for the quality of your Life Experience. You have only yourself to forgive.

When humankind see the unutterable Fullness of Joy and Freedom that has been denied them by the suppresion of the Truth of Body Translation, they will arise and seek without delay the Way to live as Immortals who are able to Manifest at Will on any plane. Human Beings have an inalienable Right to enjoy such a life as Physically Immortal men and women. To deny anyone this Right is to deny your own allegiance to Life. If everyone, no matter what their station in Life or spiritual state of advancement, would try *just a little bit* harder to be more loving and grateful in daily living, then the cumulative effect of all these little efforts combined would create a Divine Seismic shock of such power and love that Peace would in an instant forever Gain the upper hand throughout this troubled world. And then, the Reality of Eternal Life shall spring alive from out of every Heart to Laurel with Victory the highest and Most ancient Will of Original Creation.

The materialisation and/or dematerialisation of a Physically Immortal being in the Glastonbury area at Easter of 1984 or at any other time is an event that could change the world. The Key is **Relation of Event to Life**. Such a Global Omega Point is only successful to the degree that it is both comprehended and assimilated into the everyday consciousness of all humanity. The best way we can aid this process is by striving with all our faith and strength to become this Immortal Being in our own Self. For when we meet the Immortals, we shall be as they...

> Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth... I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven... **there shall be an end to death**... for the old order has passed away!
>
> – from *Revelation* XXI

CROWLEY AND POWYS

Did Aleister Crowley and John Cowper Powys know each other? They shared the same, lifelong best friend in Louis Wilkinson. A very interesting novel could be written based on the fact that the Great Beast and J.C. both lived in Greenwich Village at the same period. I offer the following bits and pieces as a start towards a future comparative study of the two writers that someone may someday attempt.

The poems of Powys have a fascinating similarity to those of Crowley. The Powys invocation "Demogorgon" could pass as a work of Aleister's. The massive *Equinox* edited and largely written by Crowley contains several links. The March 1910 issue contains a review of *An Interpretation of Genesis* by Theodore Powys, one of the three Powys brothers who achieved literary success. This enthusiastic piece by Captain Fuller is in sharp contrast to the reception of the Genesis study by orthodox literary scholars. Kenneth Hopkins, in his otherwise excellent *The Powys Brothers*, thinks little of *Genesis* and then makes this revealing statement on page 23: "it might be found akin to the equally odd writings being produced about the same time by Aleister Crowley".

Crowley's *Blue Equinox*, published in 1919, contains a review of the Wilkinson novel, *A Chaste Man*, which is dedicated to John Cowper Powys. Also, Wilkinson himself makes his debut as an "Equinox" writer with a piece about Ezra Pound.

I am convinced that Crowley and Powys were deep admirers of each other through Wilkinson and probably met in New York. Yet there is very scant literary evidence of this. Yet perhaps this is not surprising, for Crowley's autobiography was written several years before the major novels of Powys were published.

However, I have discovered an early commentary on Powys and Wilkinson written by Crowley which, once again, demonstrates that Aleister was far ahead of his time. During World War I, Crowley managed to infiltrate the German propaganda movement in New York and got himself hired as editor of *The International*. I would like to see Crowley's writings collected and republished someday from out of this obscure magazine. The following is taken from the July 1917 issue:

> "Pantomorphopsychonosophilography. The new school of literature: a note on Louis Umfraville Wilkinson and John Cowper Powys". By Aleister Crowley...
>
> Now we have discovered pantomorphism. We have broken down the line between man and monkey, nay, between man and moss and malachite... it is only the modern pantomorphis who makes the seaweed and the spindrift characters in his novel as active as its human protagonists... The psychonosologists have begun to construct manuals of spiritual pathology. Von Krafft-Ebing was the first to gain popular appreciation... He erred (he has since seen the error) in classing these manifestations as disease. They are "variations" in the

Darwinian sense, evidence of the growth of the race. The ox, the savage, the Victorian, the modern American, the cave-man, do not suffer in this way from the specialization of the functions of the soul. But since these phenomena are undoubtedly accompanied by severe distress we are at present justified in speaking of psychonosology... Deeper thinkers, deeper because they are artists with the vision of Gods, not groping, purblind men of science, have gone further, and discerned sex beating at the heart of man's simplist, most conscious, and most rational acts.

I refer to Louis Wilkinson and John Cowper Powys. In the latter his "Eureka" is so vivid that it resembles the cry of an epileptic; the former bears himself more godlike... Powys makes you want to go out and invent something deliciously damnable; Wilkinson makes you feel that everything you have ever done is damnably delicious. The former reveals to you the possibilities of life; the latter reveals you to yourself as a past master of all actualities... These pantomorphop-sychonosophilographers have "unloosed the girders of the soul"... In a few years we shall be as happy in being ourselves as we have hitherto been in our dependence, physical, mental and moral, upon others. Then, not till then, will constructive work, the mapping out of a Free Universe, become possible. And in that day let us not forget the noble, the austere, the elegant, the august spade work of these great pantomorphopsychonosophilographers, John Cowper Powys and Louis Umfraville Wilkinson.

Geoffrey Ashe on the Way of Aleister Crowley

"Those who follow his lead and find their vocations will attain freedom and need no further ethics. But beyond that, they will be wiser, better integrated and more effective than others; they will attain a gradual ascendancy; they will work a sort of alchemical change through society, reordering it in terms of their own salvation".

"Do What You Will" p. 238
W.H. Allen, 1974

THOUGHTS ON GLASTONBURY
DISTILLED FROM *THE BOOK OF MAHDI*: 1975-80

We are establishing a global network of friends who are all striving to attain Physical Immortality. When one of us breaks on through, this event will be instantly communicated throughout the network and will provide a tremendous inspiration for the rest of us on the Path. Every overcoming, every manifestation of Body Translation, is rapidly accelerating the Full Flowering of your Star's Perfection... For you to Manifest this Truth – That Is the Great Work! You are a Star Shining in the Heart of Heaven.. Most Holy is Your Victory! Be always ready for the Coming of the Christed Mahdi... For Mahdi May appear through You!

Sing your holy word from every shrine on earth from Shasta to Glastonbury and your prayers shall be glorified in their power. Invoke angels and deities of every land and faith to heal, awaken and vitalise the Body of our mother planet!

You are commanded to communicate the Science of Body Translation to all beings as rapidly as love allows. Reveal your presence in every way that will hasten the Resurrection of Albion and establish the Kingdom of New Jerusalem forever without end... We are summoned to celebrate Easter Everywhere at Glastonbury in 1984 with all the strength of Love at our command.

And may we join together in holy Global matrimony in Merlin's realm of Glastonbury in 1984... From this heart centre we shall create and generate a light never known before in all Creation – a light shining onto the ends of reality, consumate our Great Work, sing of New Beginnings, and Hail the end of death...

Oh let the Divine Will of this Planet culminate in an Omega Point of holy Destiny that gives a Perfect Peace and Joy forever and ever without end!

The True Will of every member of the Omega Point Foundation is dedicated to the Joyful Revelation of Body Translation. We are striving to purify our own Stars onto the Vibrations of complete physical and spiritual Immortality and to share this path with as many friends as Love allows. On Easter 1984 we will be in Glastonbury to

THE BROTHERS POWYS

RICHARD PERCEVAL GRAVES

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124 In fact, the Wilkinsons's marriage was in serious difficulties. Frances still loved Louis, but she thought that his behaviour in some respects was scandalous. She did not complain about his sexual infidelity, having agreed to his being allowed sexual freedom before they were married, at a time when she was so inexperienced that she had little idea what such freedom might entail. However, his general conduct did not always live up to her own high standards, and earlier in the year she had been particularly shocked by Louis's association with Aleister Crowley.[23] Louis, as John reckoned, enjoyed 'the perverted snobbishness of hobnobbing with so notorious [a] worshipper of devils', and was annoyed by his wife's attempts to restrain him. Crowley was also angry, and played on Frances's nerves until she was in such a wretched and terrified state of mind that he almost succeeded, with Louis's complicity,[24] in having her committed to an asylum. She avoided the trap, but only just; Louis was somehow brought to his senses, and the two of them had left New York for a while to escape Crowley's malign influence.[25] John made it clear that he had every sympathy with Frances over this unpleasant affair, and no doubt found himself a much more welcome visitor than he had been for some time.

23 Oliver Wilkinson in conversation with the present author, 26 September 1980.

132 Ever since her conflict with Aleister Crowley, Frances had been ill with heart trouble, and on at least one occasion she actually collapsed, her lips turning blue in a painful and terrifying bout of angina; but Louis appeared to be no support. Their son Oliver recalls that their marriage had by then degenerated 'into a series of vicious domestic arguments'.[6] Knowing that John had been in love with her for seven years, Frances finally decided to place herself entirely in his hands, as much for the children's sake as for her own. This was astonishing news for John, who had grown accustomed to their existing relationship, and 'after the reluctances and agitations of a man too suddenly presented with his heart's desire'

LETTERS TO CLIFFORD TOLCHARD

from

John Cowper Powys

with a Memoir by Clifford Tolchard

Village Press

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© 1975 Clifford Tolchard

October 18th, 1950

32 Thrilled are we by the photos my friend—but for heaven's sake my unequalled Songe-Greux don't 'ee go wasting your creative humour & great gifts over an old chap like me & on recording what I blurt out to your appreciative ears as I sit drunk with your Pathetic reciprocity, good lord no! I would never dream of letting you print in John O'l *anything* I said about my friends Louis & Aleister Crowley. Why! I tell you I am with his confidence and with those of *all* my correspondents (including your dear self) a Mausoleum of Secrecy & discretion—No! No! & it would hurt the feelings of my relatives if you reported in a magazine that I shook my first at their grandad! Theirs you see as well as mine. No, no my dear friend we have to be a bit discreet where relatives are concerned. I blurt out anything—all sorts of outrageous things to my personal friends—but I don't want them printed in magazines—Why my dear friend I'm sure you'd feel just the
33 same if I started writing for some paper all the amusing & scandalous things you have or might have (if I'd ever given you time) confessed to me! No, no, my dear Songe-Greux—Pathetic Pantagrulian comrade of my funny bone let's see you soon & I'll blurt out plenty more—but I don't want any of it printed.

P & I both send you our best love and to dear Lily too if you please.

yr old
J.C.P.

LETTERS OF

JOHN COWPER POWYS

TO LOUIS WILKINSON

1935–1956

VILLAGE PRESS

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Louis Wilkinson was among the oldest and best of John Cowper Powys' friends, and their association dated back almost sixty years; no one had been more closely in touch with the whole Powys family, and in particular with the three famous writers it has produced -- T.F., Llewelyn and John. Wilkinson's book *Welsh Ambassadors* (first published in 1936 — over his pen-name Louis Marlow) gave a comprehensive account of the family and included many of their letters. The present volume, first published in 1958, when both Louis Wilkinson and John Cowper Powys were still alive, contains the letters — just over 300 of them — written during the ensuing years and provides a fascinating commentary on the life and writings of its author, and on his reaction to people, to noted contemporaries, to private and public events, and to literature of the past and present.

Crowley, Aleister, 34, 72, 118, 119, 121, 148, 192n., 240 (death of), 241, 242, 245, 254, 270, 282–4, 286, 323, 338, 339, 340, 364, 375

Louis Wilkinson died on September 13th, 1966, at the age of 84. John Cowper Powys died on June 17th, 1963, in Wales, aged 91.

The photo of Wilkinson with Powys was taken at Blaenau Ffestiniog, in September 1958.

VILLAGE PRESS

34

you, my Whip-top, have—& your power of '*Sacred Astonishment*', the highest virtue of mortal man, as illustrated in your meeting with Aleister Crowley, as you descended the bus, with 'Morwyn' under your arm. . . . Do you suppose that our young generation could possibly even so much as *catch* that huge Dutch-Giant Chat such as Gargantua impinged upon—preceded by his little dog—"Remain seated, Gentlemen! & let me learn the matter of your Discourse."

Well! you perfect Aryan, Aryan, Aryan! god 'ild you!

your

J.

72

July 27th 1940

It is too near the going of the post to launch out now at the end of this letter into a discourse on Mr. Norbury & his book on Lulu. The thing is to give him all possible rope, I think, don't you? And later, when we have the book in hand in MSS *before* printing, make a few comments? But I'm all for giving the man his fling, unworried & unhindered, aren't you? And such is my nature (as I have told Mr. Norbury) that I *cannot* stop flattering & shall flatter till I flatter Theodore's *John Death*!* "What a handsome *jaw* you have, Mr. Death!" I shall say. "It doesn't *recede* like mine!"

Well, good luck! . . . As to Crowley's poem—why shouldn't he have—but I *must* stop!

December 5th 1942

118 . . . Yes—yes, *sure*! that "Pogony" word was taken away from your charge & put to the proper account!

By the way, did you happen to notice (in the New Statesman & Nation, week before last, I think) my verses—16 lines being a supposed discovery of "a tantalizing fragment of an Elizabethan Play"? I got 2nd prize. But, as Theodore would say, who in that office of young men about town has collared a poor old gentleman's prize?? for I *have not had it yet**. That Competition was Number *666*, too, Crowley's favourite Number out of Revelations, the number of "the Beast"! The odd thing about it was that both the Winner of Prize 1 & your old Tottie, Prize II (a thing the setter of the game, Mr. Vavasour—like the Poet in C. Kingsley's 'Two Years Ago'—altogether missed) did not keep but on the contrary entirely broke the rules of the competition which said "a lost *Elizabethan* play", whereas mine being about the queen's death and his being about the question "Who was Shakespeare?" obviously belong to the reign of *James*.

O my dear, to change the subject & leave these childish sports . . . Peter [*his sister Marian's son*] has been called up & has gone to Camp. All the conscripts from that particular County—"Rock County", I think it is round there, by Sneden's Landing & Palisades—met together in carts with ribbons & bands, quite like the old days, I imagine, & had a public send-off by all their relations and local elders. How extremely disagreeable for shy & touchy & sulky recruits! Like *we* might have well been? . . .

Phyllis does all the house work now save lighting the fires, and *that* she did yesterday, & for both houses—but today *not*, thank the Lord. But you know how it is!—impossible (without being a different person from what I am—a person with
119 *authority*, with a house where the woman *doesn't* rule as she always does, thanks be!, in mine) yes, impossible to stop "*them*" (our dear companions) from risking their healths.

I am glad old Master Crowley is in good liking and good taking and good fettle once more. . . .

I do not believe, my dear Louis, that there exists—well! out of Ireland anyway—an individual (male *or* female) so riddled, punctured, scorified & perforated with Superstition as I am. The truth is that tho' I am less original & far less integral than Theodore, & tho' with my Noble sense of duty I struggle to overcome it, I am very like Theodore in those moods of his when he dreads the *evil eye* turned on him by—any other person in the wide world. But I am not able ever to be as stern & severe as he is, & I admire him for this. It means the absence of all obsequious Boswellianism, which is in my very marrow & bones & must be the indelible defect of all my best qualities! Yes, as I've seen Theodore with Old Hardy and with Colonel Doddipole [*Doddington*], to both of whom—God!—how I wd. bow & scrape! The truth is I'm like him in my Fear of the Eye but lack his natural weight of—what the hell?—of character & integrity, *Massed Base* or originality or Dynamo of Magnetic Authority or just plain simple Formidableness. "A miracle! a miracle!" and "A mystery, a mystery" *I* say for the 1000000th time—whereas you, as far as I can make out, aren't afraid of anyone, Louis old Upright! Louis old Pithecanthropos Erectus!

[*drawing to illustrate this*]

It really is a remarkable thing how bloody brave you are! No, I'm not fooling or jesting or being funny, I mean it. It simply aston—ishes me!

[*drawing of himself bowed to the ground before a "magnate"*]

I advance towards all Magnates thus—O I *must* be a Jew.

And now I have been converted by a lot of latest Welsh scholars on the subject of Welsh *syntax*. . . .

I really know a very very very great deal about this! and I 120
am right to be proud of my scholarship in Welsh which is *very* great, really it is! I don't *often* boast, my dear, for as you know I play what dear R.L.S. (that famous stylist) so wittily & profoundly calls "the sedulous ape" to *Uriah Heep*. Aye! but I say, isn't Dickens the master of all masters & the genius of all geniuses over his people's names? Who could beat him there? Doesn't the sound and smell & taste & look of "*Uriah*", just merely as a word, make you think of an open pustule on the nose (or cheek perhaps) of a dead undertaker's wife's underclothes-peddler?

. . . Now for the Lord's sake let Phyllis & me know your view of this DARLAN business??? It's a complete puzzle to us both. . . .

"I think of you" (as with very different thoughts both religious preachers and amorous and lascivious lovers say) whenever I pass a certain very great *stone* at the entrance to a certain wood—"in cammin di nostra vita mi ritrovai dritta smarrita perduto in selva selvaggia", as Dante observes. This Stone I have called—for it is a Colossus of a great Stone—by the name of "Louis's Stone", for it is a wood I frequent more often than the one with that "Cerrig y Gwymp" where once you fell down. *Good luck* go before you and no buggerly devil come behind you. Phyllis sends her sincere affection & so do I.

yr old John Facing Four Ways.

* He had it, of course, quite soon.

January 18th 1943

120 . . . Your description of Clifford Bax is very winning, beguiling, & seducing—I think he must be rather like *me*! I look at the dark cloud or the Mushroom that hides his noble phyzz with deep curiosity.

[*drawing to illustrate*]

I note fully about "Pogony"—absolvo te et me de omnibus peccatis tuis et meis similibusque, et lapsis linguae mentisque animaeque!

121 Yes, I got the 10/- from the *Statesman* & made it go towards a French Rabelais, for my last piece of pure unbelievable good luck is to have been commissioned by Bodley Head to write a book called 'Introducing Rabelais', with my own translations from the original! What do you think of that? Lucky I've got Phyllis, eh?—who *is* good at French. It'll be, seriously though, very interesting to note where old Urquhart has departed from his text. And I'm hugely elated because—— O dear me! as you of all men know, there's a particular unctuous "we are men of the world and when *we* die the world will cease" tone about these Inner Circle inverted Prigs of Beings-in-the-Know-All to whom it has been hitherto left to "introduce" Rabelais. You wait—you'll like this work of brother John's best of all he's done—you'll say "Well! *that* was a hole in English Culture that wanted filling, & though, as we know, what Jack's got to fill it with is none of the erectest or sturdiest—still, I warrant it'll hit the mark!" Yes, that Worldly Wisdom of yours is sound & real & not at all like the irritating affectations of these bohemian & gingerly dons who adore to boast about being readers of Rabelais. . . .

I have just now every cause for eye-hoarding, for the bloody pair of pimpers & peepers have a ——— tendency to cry off long before—no! no! I won't be unfair to them—a *little* before they should. Tho' I haven't always that excuse for damning & cursing them as I do, but I keep them up to the job in that way by pretending anger—aye, I make them shake! To you I'll tone it down & mute it down & soften it up a trifle—but I'm very stern with them "being that." They being—what a curious classical construction, a sort of ablative absolute—"Caesar having set out" or "the camp having been settled", etc etc. The Welsh do it too—but enough! I must go on—Being as they are a pair of girls by whom I make my living. . . .

I praise, praise, praise & again praise you for writing that thing for Crowley, and I admire your blurb for him: it couldn't be better done—& I am become a blurb virtuoso—have *had* to become it! We both thought highly of Crowley's poem (or new version of Marseillaise) in French verse [*La Gaulloise*].

122 Our love to you; & to Joan, our dear & excellent friend——
yr old John-Janus-Side-face (not yet in ashes).

When you are over 70 in Gt. Britain (that Paradise of Old Dizzards) your value mounts up, up, up, up!

147 Old Littleton's *70th Birthday*

. . . Your letter was dated *April 8*, the day of your 1st Marriage & the day after your 3rd wife was Born.

Well, my dear, I certainly do thank you for this Miraculous Draught of a Hundred Pieces of Gold. It is Louis the Archangel's doing and it is Marvellous in my Eyes. And I note your Disclaimer of the Rest which I *think must* have been due to Vernwy Hughes alias Ann Temple alias Mrs Bisco, for the only other Human Being possible in the case (to my Sherlock Holmes or Detective Maigret eye) who has any association with my Manager's Office in Bedford Street is James Hanley, and, judging from his habitual & profound Reserve (though nobody has a kinder HEART), and from the fact that he had a week or so before this Eruption told us that he had just done what I've long implored him to do, i.e. taken Mr. Pollinger's Firm as his Agents, it would have been psychologically impossible for him to be the Guy Fawkes who blew the confidence of his Manager in Mr John Cowpat's financial security Sky-High. Yes, that was a week at least before this Emeute or Putsch partaking of the nature of an Insurrection in the Office, before the time of my good & worthy friend Mr. P's shocked amazement at the fact of his client being quite so REDUCED & (like you in Bristol or Lancaster or York, Pa [*Pennsylvania*]) "up against it."

But I do seriously assure you, Lullaby-Lu, that I haven't, mind you, said one word directly to Ann Temple, this Thibetan Idol who has left her pedestal in Lassa to give the deserving (in this Ultima Thule) their Deserts, & I am glad (you can believe!) to be spared *that emotion*; for it wd. be a bit too direct for that labyrinthine system of hollow catacombs—full of girlish graves—that I call my Heart. But in a very innnnnddddirrreecttttly *indirectly aimed* manner, using Sister Miss Gwen Hughes, who has always been my special & original

148 confidant in the family, as a sort of tangential breakwater, I have indicated that I *suspected* her hand in it all—but that all I *knew* was that it all begun with that Lunch of the Olympians at which, it has crossed my mind, were discussed the Affairs of the much-enduring Tiresias, that skipping old gentleman. . . .

But it is quite clear that you are absolutely justified in feeling pleasure at the upshot, for the load that has been lifted from Brother Christian's Back is *incredible*!

[*drawing of himself with a stick in the left hand and a banner in the right, inscribed "Faint yet Pursuing". The burden is shown as fallen from his shoulders.*]

I am *amazed* in wonder at your courage and benevolence and faithfulness to your ancient Cronies, &, as Rabelais calls them, "*Compaignons.*" I can see a rivalry after death on the tombstones of a lot of ambiguous aged invalidish eccentrics—

[*drawing of himself rising from the grave and pointing to Aleister Crowley who has a beast's head that is also rising from* his *grave. Under Crowley's head is written: Hic Jacet Alistair Crowley* (*No.* 666). *Louis was his friend to the end. Over J.C.P.'s head is written: J.C.P. cocks a snook at the Master. Under J.C.P.'s head: Hic Jacet J.C.P.* No. 4. *Louis was his friend to the end.*]

My dear, I'm greatly thrilled at your being at Montacute and at Joan's pleasure and yours in the place, and I think it will simply delight our Will when he hears of your having seen Herbert Rogers [*gardener at Montacute Vicarage when the father of J.C.P. was vicar*]. No, I'd never heard of the death of old Mr Montacute.

Phyllis & I are forever discussing you. Love to Joan & luck for your next Book. I do most heartily congratulate you on the success of the 'Devil' & on that £225 to be eventually laid down on your lap & *then laid out* on the best Wine.

yrs more & more Jack up the Beanstalk.

December 23rd 1945

191 . . . I'm indeed congratulating you, my dear, on that Spanish Translation of the 'Devil in Crystal' & I do hope Kenneth Hopkins' Belgian Publisher will have French versions of this & of

192 'Swan's Milk' and that 'Forth, Beast!' will really appear in Jan. But the best immediate practical news are the Birds in your Hand, i.e. £25 for phantasy—& I long to read this in print—and £25 down and another to come for the BOOK of the LAW* which I feel pretty sure you'll *be* able to "clarify" all right. "Louis clarifies the Book of the Law" would be a good subject for a picture.

Well! I'll tell you details of my state.

I've tried hard to resume walks but I find even short, yes, very short ones—& I've worked this out by most careful premeditated experiment—always mean that my "Side"—for, unlike Our Redeemer's after the spear of the soldier was withdrawn & blood & water came out, my side, the Dual-Demon one under the Right Ribs, gives twitches ominous & smartings sinister, or dexter I should say if I weren't addressing Mr Dexter Foothood—and finally the acids get to it & I have those times in the night when knuckles and thumbs are in action, pressing into the place affected, for such pressure is very relieving & comforting but of course destructive of sleep until it ceases to be required. So I have decided to stop walking for a fortnight at least—perhaps even till this duodenum ulcer—for I know there is ulceration under my right ribs—stops altogether. This is my decision for I am myself entirely (with Phyllis's help) my only Doctor now. After sending me to the Hospital my little Welsh doctor (10 miles off) has clearly given me up, & tho' Dr Satchwell here is a very careful and good Doctor & did Redwood much good service, I am wily like Lulu in steering clear of good doctors, tho' always ready to steal ideas from bad ones and quack quack goosey gander ones—hedge & ditch doctors and witch doctors I listen to & consult willingly & then *follow or not.*

This feeling of an ulcer is totally different from acid-dyspepsia tho' the two are connected of course. But one *very* good change is owing to my ward-bed fellow patient (not the same bed as in Rabelais' hospital de la Pieta de Grand-Dieu-Pont-Neuf at

193 Lyons where they were 3 in a bed—but in another bed) being a chemist and a first rate one. With this chemist's prescription I have every morn 2 tablespoonfuls of a divinely *textured* stuff called "petrolarger" & 1 teaspoonful mixed in with it of cascara . . .

This time I *had* to write a proper letter but I really must use *all my will* to *not* write letters or I shall never get my long Romance done! Phyllis has bought me *20 postcards*!

Yes, I wrote to Theodore to say I *thought* he must be 70.

yr ever John o' Dreams the un-costive Medium.

* Aleister Crowley had asked me to make a "popular version" of his 'Book of the Law'. It is in circulation among his disciples in the United States and elsewhere. The "phantasy" was a short story published in a collection of short stories by various writers.

240 Your letter . . . of the 28th safe to hand in my warm bosom & I am extremely impressed by the enclosure about the shiners and rainers & lily-white boys, but am rather glad you say I'd better *not* keep it, lest that great late one's GHOST come after it! [*Aleister Crowley, who had just died.*] It's exactly the sort of thing I like. Did Crowley write it himself—on the topic of those Cathar-Gnostics? I guess he must have, for those early Gnostics would never have known the old song "Green grow the rushes". It's *very* good. I like the *shiners* and the *rainers* and the eight bold *reigners*. *That* surely must come from the late Master's hand? And six for the Six Proud Walkers. These might well be John, Littleton, Bertie, Llewelyn, & Willy!

Did you see the picture of Crowley in a top-hat in the 'Daily Express' on the front page? Phyllis announced it to me when I came ramping down with shining morning face from my Pisgah stroll with Omnipotence before breakfast—and then I saw the well-known countenance under the brim of that top-hat—and the description of the picture. That mysterious expression "*Caption*" I expect should be used, though it is a word unknown to the Six Proud Walkers—like Plush-fours or Zola.

241 I like well the idea of a ten year old son of Crowley. Do you like the boy's mother? I long to hear *how* & under precisely what conditions your own reception of the news of his removal to the next dimension took place?

Thank the lord your 'Sackville' is all in order save the Index. When it *is* out you needn't give us all copies, my dear. *Give* Theodore one but *lend* us one to read and we can send it on to some other of that Circle whose centre is everywhere where you are, and nowhere where you're not. God! my dear, but it will be of the most fascinating interest to see what the *Critics do* say about your 'Sackville'. But I doubt if the really very learned historians ever write criticism for Magazines or Reviews or daily papers. I fancy the sort of person who *will* write won't know nearly as much as you do—and, if he wants to be horrid to you, will attack you on some general ground, personal, dramatic, philosophical, religious, stylistic—*anything* rather than historical. But I do fully follow your apprehensions on such a point as—*Was* he or *wasn't* he at the battle of Dettingen?? That was the battle where George II distinguished himself, wasn't it?

No sign in the heavens of my 'Rabelais' coming out. I am reading 'Tristram Shandy' over & over, & shall disconnect my Preface from the 18th Century entirely. Yes, you are perfectly right. Theodore *is* the only one of us who is interested in that century. I myself detest, dislike, and really do *run away from it* when I can. *It gives me the Jitters.* It isn't only that I'm—how *do* you spell that word?—allurgic to it. It gives me the horrors. I don't like the nasty horrid people—all wigs & wiggles—people who never had baths! or washed at all! and nowhere to walk for fear of highwaymen! I shiver at it & shrink from it as I do from spiders and centipedes & as some do from pussy cats.

I am slowly, very slowly, improving the last chapter of my 'Dark Ages' romance—more than 2000 long-hand pages. How many days & nights, do you suppose, are described in some 2100 pages? Only 4 *days* & *nights*!

Phyllis sends her love. O she says to tell you she selected as her birthday present a bottle of *Beaune* which we bought in
242 Ruthin at a wine-merchant's. And in a paper called 'Everyman' we've been reading today of the Nunnery from the year 1450, where for 500 years they've made this Beaune. When you next write do give us a short paragraph on Beaune wine.

ever your old John . . .

April 8th 1948

245 . . . Your excellent letter about Aleister's *Funeral* to hand dated March 26th wherein you quote this second, third, or even fourth Startling Notice from the newspapers of your own behaviour, accusing you, *directly from personal experience*, of Open Satanism & saying "this sort of thing ought to be Stopped in Christian England!" Good God! *you did go it!*

O my dear but how perfectly awful & how far more terrifying to certain Persons in me than any of the late Master's Antics are the Imaginative Horrors of some of these Believers in the Blessed Trinity like C. Lewis & his late friend C. Williams. This lordly "loving laughing" Christianity is the limit. Have you read yet 'The Place of the Lion' by C. Williams? Are they, these C.'s, a pair of *Caroluses*, do you suppose? These two Welsh Gentlemen—for both Williams & Lewis are without any question Welsh names.

Phyllis always provides *her* difficult Mr Welsh with a sedative to his duodenal Over-Excitement by reading aloud to me Modern Fiction—as good as Milton's long-clay pipe-full of tobacco & large glass of whiskey before he went to bed after playing on his private organ (not a hand organ, I am assured —for I know nothing of such music) till his thoughts played the very devil with these rhythmical reduplications of his *mother of all men*, and till his daughters came into it, even the one who was so good, kind, gentle, & yielding to him that when Addison saw her (in extreme old age) she kept murmuring: "My dear father, my dear father, my dear father!" & then (parting the snow-white hair on her own stainless forehead as she sat up to great Mr Addison): "He wore his hair parted in the Middle!" she tenderly cried; and, soon after those words, is said to have incontinently died, overpowered by her re-collections—for he was a man of parts, our greatest of all poets —no wonder Mister Eliot hates to think of him!

I am greatly tickled by your refutation of the unity of the psyche. I expect you born copulaters generate in some Para-celsian manner eidola of the opposite sex . . . and these Larvae & Lemurs are at your disposal in vacant or in pensive mood
246 and then your heart with pleasure fills as you enjoy uncounted frills and even play with newer thrills . . . the old Thibetan Game of Squills. . . .

Yes, I thought too that Kenneth's contribution was excellent. In fact do you know what I did with another copy of it—sent it to BERLIN.

yr old Johnitchy the Toothless, whose Bark is all he's got.

253 From Jaccqueline, his Michaelmas Goose, to the Marquis Make-the-Feathers-fly.

Yes, . . . Phyllis & I had a regular Glory-be-to-Louis Dialogue Chant after we read, as we did on Friday & then on Sunday, these two conjugal attacks on both you & [*Lord George*] Sackville by the Wests of the West.* As an American, Phyllis, & as an America-phil, your old funny-face, both feel really fierce on your behalf. We are both snatching at the book. And O how good and rare and lively a great lord's book it is!—so far as we've yet swum in these waters of shadow and reflections and darting fins and embarkations to Cytherean isles & lampoons of so much of the utmost cruelty of shame & humiliation that could be borne and repelled only by a man with a power of *not caring what people said* and with a profoundly subtle & prehistoric ichthyosaurodactylic humour & pithiocanthropos ice-age-tiger-toothed-Mammoth hide—& more strength yet to that ghostly rhinoceros horn! . . .

We have Peter and Ty [*his sister Marian's son and daughter-in-law*] here, so I cannot say all I would even on the first pages of this Biography. That you've rattled the Wests to this tune is proof of your genius. People don't mind when there isn't a mind at work, and you are a very formidable mind at work, which is the last thing people like—well! unless it's a mind like that of your old Madame-Bawd Mrs Quickly-Johanna which is shamelessly used for the sole & single purpose, & *at any length*, of pleasing her dear gentlemen!

O I do like this book so well! What on earth put it into your
254 head to set out on such a hard task?—But you've done it, Suffolk, you've done it, my Cock of the Walk! so never mind what set you off! This Book of yours is the thing and I tell you it just suits your retired Madame, who in her day—well, enough of that! . . . It compels me to stir you up with 4 pokes of a Victorian parasol to consider like hell what Biography—not necessarily as long or as difficult or needing as much research into history as this—you will work out next. It is absolutely a triumph that your natural integrity (for in *my* sense *and* in Theodore's *and* in Llewelyn's your integrity of "honesty" does, I confess, *beat the band*!) combined with your massive feeling for words should have made you the Champion of the World's Rogues. Where you beat me is in Courage, & I fancy that is where you beat us all (except perhaps Lulu)—yes, compared with you, we are funks! I am a funk—(I'm *not* quite sure about old Littleton being a funk any more than I am about Lulu, & I *know* my son isn't for I've watched him from early days——He's been handicapped but a funk he isn't!) But *most of us are*; and I look with amazement at you! I was always funky of Crowley, & so I was of your friend Oswald Greene, & of a Corpus pal of old Littleton's also called Greene —"Satan Greene" *he* was called.

How interesting to make a list of the people a person's been afraid of in life! The best to my mind of modern American writers is a certain Saul Bellow who has only written 2 books—

1. 'Dangling Man' (a title almost worthy of the author of 'Forth, Beast')

2. 'The Victim', dealing with this sort of funk I suffer from. 'The Victim' is a Jew and the sod he is scared of is a New England semi-aristocratic *Bum*.

. . . I don't believe you have ever been afraid of anything except perhaps *Cows*. God what a sadistic thrill of pleasure I got on that occasion *in that lane* between the Thorne Cross & Montacute!

[*drawing of this incident. J.C.P. holds a cow by the neck and is saying "Poke them into him!", the horns of the cow being prominent. With arm upraised the victim has his back to a gate or fence inscribed "Trespassers Prosecuted. No admission this way. Keep Out Keep Out, keep Out. No Exit."*] 255

But the great thing, I implore you, my dear, to think about is another biography & "whitewashing" another *honest* rascal that these dishonest rascals of History as we are taught it have blackened and maligned for posterity. This isn't a Machiavellian or Judas-like trick to persuade you out of the paths of Fiction into those of "Lives." It is a really very lively (and Phyllis fully joins with me here) reaction of pure unmixed moral & literary & philosophical delight in a 1st class Book! You'll be surprised how soon we'll have both finished it—for that's part of its quality. It leads anyone on.

Well, I trust you'll get a lot of praise and many such illuminating boomerangs! I embrace you.

J.

* Reviews of 'Sackville of Drayton' by the Hon. V. Sackville-West and by her husband the Hon. Harold Nicolson. Miss Sackville-West's view of her relation Lord George Sackville was the unfavourable or even hostile one that has prevailed since the eighteenth century.

269 My dear, I think 'Owl Hoot & Cock Crow' wd. be more cheerful than 'Cock Crow & Owl Hoot', but I like the title very particularly—only maybe 'tis a bit more à la Lulu than à la Louis! But it's *very* good as a title, & that it makes me think of Lulu is not exactly an objection to it as a title for your book, rather the contrary!** But I say, my dear, do make your book as *personal* as you dare!—the more personal it is the better—& as a critic ("John *thinks* he is the best critic in the world now living!") I say beware of slipping off away from personalities & from personal events into *too long disquisitions* (Think of *me* telling you not to be too *lengthy*!) on various sub-personal matters such as tastes and prejudices that aren't dramatically or vividly personal or profoundly characteristic of you. What I'm trying to say I think really is this: Remember, my dear,

270 that Lulu's Best Book by far still remains 'Skin for Skin'. Why??? Because it's his Most Personal—and why is 'Swan's Milk' your Best??? For the same reason!

It's when you plunge into people & *events* like your reading that Burial Service over Aleister Crowley & Watching his Cremation, or being at the Death-Bed of that Old Homo in Bath* (if he *is* dead yet!), or leaving London for the country & exactly your sensations as you decide on this—O yes! and your talk to me about your love of "Doing Nothing"—"for ever & ever", like that cliché tale of the poor Slavey. You know, my dear, I remember so well how when we were travelling in America together I made a hell of a fuss to have a *book to read* & you said you enjoyed "looking out of the window"! & I was simply staggered by the originality of this idea. By the way you sure do turn the tables on us Powyses & our Cult of "Nature the Dear Old Nurse" *there*! Do you know this Art of Contemplation has always been my worst—well! not quite that, but awfully close to it—of all unpleasant things. Like our "dear C. Lamb" & "The Poet Cowper", "I can't sit & think—books think for me".

But now, with my one eye so ticklishly & tenderly guarded & all too soon to be all too frail, I *have* to *learn to contemplate*. O! O! O! O! *what* a horrid holiday task!! My son, my son, it must be done; so down with your breeches & up with your bum! Yes, I have, I have, I have at least to begin this *Grammar of Thinking*:—to enjoy that bloody blasted bothersome boring ennui-ing horror of sitting & thinking! Yes, I have to practise the ABC of Thought. And you should see some, or feel some, or hear some of My Thoughts! I bet Theodore's Tramp (yes, that *was* a story!) never had such hedge-row devils after him!

Of course *even there* (note this, honey!) I am born so fatally copy-cat and bookish that I can't even think of a tramp's hedge-row devils without thinking of Bewick's Book of Birds in my Dad's Study. This isn't show-off or pose—my enemies don't get me right there at all. I *am* a born actor but I am so self-conscious as to cease to be self-conscious. I have indeed really acquired a Jesus-child innocence!

271 We Four Persons, one male and three female, that is to say Aunt Harriet or Mrs Van Dyke, "The Mistress" or Phyllis's Mother, Phyllis herself, & John Cowper Puggery, are *all* greatly *relieved* at the DEATH of one of us. *Guess which!* Yes! How good you are at guessing! If it were John he couldn't be writing. If it were Phyllis he wouldn't be writing. If it were her mother—— No, *it is her aunt*, who ought to have been "the 1st to go" as she was the oldest (86). So it is Nature, as our Undertaker says. Well! Aunt Harriet has been cremated at the Birkenhead Crematorium. Do please tell us, my dear, your own views & feelings on cremation.

yr ever and under ever and over ever John. . . .

P.S. My huge 'Romance of the Dark Ages' did *not* find favour in America, so I can tell you, my dear, I've dropt all grand airs about it over here & now am "bowing & scraping" and *not* laying down the Law at all—like that young gent Macaulay loves to refer to as a "tyro", wh., when I looked it up, turns out to be a Roman military term for a new conscript! I bet *you* even didn't know what a tyro was? Didn't you think it was a kid from Tyre?

** Most of this book was included in a book published later under another title.

* This must have happened to someone else.

Yes, indeed, P. & I would be awfully glad to borrow from you for a few weeks, when the New Year has shaken off its tinsel and spangles and sparklets and—what do you call those shiny things?—*Sequins*, that unexpurgated & truthful life* of Crowley; not the one with Ralph Shirley in but the other, the Official Life, the "Great Beast" one. Yes, we'd love to borrow that one.

January 8th 1952

282 My dear, I have been absorbed in the Aleister C. book. I think he suffered from a mental & nervous disease for which I here & now invent the name "gynaesclerosis", from "gynae" —"having to do with the nature of women", and "sclerosis" —"the hardening of tissue", by which I mean that he gradually assumed the physical & mental & emotional qualities of

283 women, but in the process of his taking them on they hardened themselves so that they ceased to resemble the qualities of women, since in these *natural* qualities there is always a tendency to & power of amazing elasticity or softening of which males are forever taking advantage. The emotions and all the feelings of the sexual act differ in women completely from those which men experience, and Crowley was by inheritance & environment and by the *fiat* of pure chance an embodiment of all the feelings women have in the sexual act *hardened* into a permanent attitude of body & mind.

Women's ecstasy in the act of love is a rapture of consummation of their life-long desire to attract, or draw towards themselves the creative energy of the male principle in the whole cosmos. In this process of drawing towards, or attraction to the limit, the spirit of the person attracted is the important thing—his whole being, his inmost soul (however ugly his body may be!) That is why women crave to be loved by priests, prophets, poets, orators, soldiers, sailors, and all those inspired men who dominate by the power of their personality or of some spiritual gift or magnetic force—and when women are being had, they keep saying to themselves: "*He* is having *Me*! *He* is having *Me*!" till, as their rapture increases, there arrives a moment when they say to themselves: "He is *mine, mine, mine*, I have swallowed him up, him up, him up"—and their ecstasy turns to a deep satisfied profound sleep with the final thought (or feeling, rather) "He is *in me*—He *is* Me!"

Men on the other hand have the desire to force their female to bear their child, and the ecstasy of *their* embrace, of *their* act of love, isn't discriminating or particular, as far as the woman goes; it is a universal planetary cosmic act of creating that the male can only desire to enjoy when the female has what happens to be the kind of sexual appeal he requires, but this appeal that sets him to work can very quickly be dispensed with, it isn't the important matter at all. The important matter is his desire to have some girl, any girl who has in *general* terms the sort of appeal he prefers to set him off.

Whereas with the woman the important matter is never never never really lost sight of in the ecstasy of the act. In fact

284 the man is all the time feeling "I am God creating a new world by having this yielded dominated subjected prey of mine", while, mingled with this god-like domination-lust for creating the child out of the dominated body, there is (in many cases waiting to appear only when the business is done) the man's worship of beauty or what happens to be beauty to him!

So when I invent the word "Gynaesclerosis" for Crowley's whole life's weird & abnormal history—and this alone explains his peculiar mania for his own breasts and belly—I show how it is a case of the life-long hardening (an almost unique abnormality) of the female feelings that in women are so quickly changed into something else by softening. After the sex act, when the two sleep side by side, the woman is happy in her sleep because she has swallowed the man, while the man is happy in his sleep because he has created a future man. Thus speaks Tiresias who was punished by Hera the queen of heaven for giving her feelings away, by having to be a woman half the year, or every other year or something like that, himself! But I daresay he knew as little about The Act as St John did about The Word when he said "In the beginning was the Word"—at which Goethe (or do I mix it up?) in 'Faust' retorts "In the beginning was the Act"—and as little as your old John knows about this matter!

... Where you & I are completely different is that your place with posterity (if any of our Circle reach those Isles of the Blest) is undoubtedly in your *personality* of which your style—whatever you write, but especially where you yourself, your ways, your tastes, your peculiarities, your physical accidents even, and the stature of your Ego in action and in movement and under diverse shocks & encounters and in the heart of domestic or social adventures—is the expression. Whereas on me you have said the last word of truth—& it's a word I now find myself repeating whenever I want to describe myself—I mean the word MEDIUM. That's why I think my best chance with posterity is totally different from yours—or Lulu's or Theodore's—for you—and they—convey to posterity the constant question "What will his Reaction be under particular circumstances?", and no conceivable posterity would ask that about me. Because

285 I am first and foremost not an author at all but a platform performer, an *actor*. And my reaction to any given encounter or meeting or awkward or exciting situation will always be "What *act* shall I select (out of my vast repertoire of *mediumships*) to put on for this particular occasion?" In this way my mind moves twice as fast as anybody's I know—much faster of course than yours or Lulu's or Theodore's, because you three have your Personality in your hands, whereas mine are all in the cupboard of what do they call it in the theatre, & I can get down the Mask I need with an invisible rush of speed!

O my dear I was so thrilled by Gordon Craig's lecture in the Third Programme on *Irving*. I felt exactly like Irving—though I would have out-Irvinged Irving on that famous occasion when he left his wife when she taunted him for his acting tricks, for I should have acted the part of——Well, any way I would not have had the gall, or the courage either, you can imagine, to "do a bunk" like that!

Phyllis and I both send our love to Joan as well as to thyself, old friend. The gods be with thee——

your old John-a-Hoop.

* I had not so described it. The other book about Aleister Crowley is by Charles Richard Cammell, intended by him as a favourable corrective to John Symonds's official biography.

January 14th 1952

I think my fear of Crowley was purely *physical*, and a hangover from old School days when I was bullied by particular types of boys.

You are always more considerate than any other living person save Phyllis about my eye, & now I have to tell you that save to you & my brothers & sisters I am going to *stop writing letters entirely*! I have agreed to stop as long as Phyllis swears she'll only answer briefly on one page, for she has her hands full as it is, poor girl, what with 2 houses & 2 aged!

Love from us both.

September 1st 1955

322 Tomorrow is Full Moon

[*drawing*]

I'm so glad we can lend you Maurice's [*Browne*] Autobiography . . . Molly, his adopted daughter, has just sent me, at my imploring, a picture of herself & do you know of whom she

323 is the living image?—Of none other than Lady Eden, our present Prime Minister's wife! I like her handwriting. . . .

No, I missed those broadcasts of Bertrand Russell, but I always feel very friendly to him. I wonder if *you* have (I doubt it, for you are wonderfully well balanced) the sort of blind irrational ill-considered prejudices for and against that I have. I have a savage prejudice against G. B. Shaw, in spite of the fact that he is one of the very few famous people who take my attitude towards Vivisection. Then I have a savage prejudice against T. E. Lawrence of Arabia, while I have a terrific affection and devotion to D. H. Lawrence. . . .

I like the idea of your having first met Lord Cecil Douglas thro' Bernie, of Bernie being mixed up with you and him in that house of lucky meetings. . . . I can't tell you how I wish I had a single drop of Shirley blood—but not one littlest drop have I, tho' I am forever grateful to my father's half-sister, my godmother Aunt Philippa, for marrying a Shirley at Oxford, for what I owe to her daughter, Cousin Alice, is beyond words—not only for taking me to visit Mrs Max Müller, the Editor of the Sacred Books of the East, but also for taking me to Frau Forster Nietzsche just soon after Nietzsche's death. Then in Poetry what I owe to Cousin Ralph includes the ancients & the moderns, always excepting Tennyson whom I owe entirely to Mother—& finally his introducing me to Yeats *and* to your Aleister Crowley, in whom Ralph was interested just as you are without being in the least scared!

It must be that the pure Saxon is nicer by intuitive nature than the Celt, whether the Celt be Welsh or Scotch or Irish or Breton or Cornish—kinder, I mean, & friendlier—much more humorous and easy-going, and above all not romantically snobbish as all we Celts are to an extreme degree. That leads me on to a theory of mine that the most pure blood in this isle is Saxon, and to be found in families that have never had any title at all. For instance near Ashbourne, when I had a course of lectures there and it was impossible to get from Cousin Alice at Shirley in easy time, I used to stay with an old gent, and a real gent he was, whose ancestors had lived in his house since before the Conquest and who had never had a title. He was

324 Mr Oakover of Oakover. Then Cousin Alice used to talk of the Shirleys of Ettington who also had always had the same house from before the Conquest and never had any title. I can so well recall her scolding me when I was pleased at her brother becoming an earl. "Earl's nothing!" she said. "Don't be snobbish, Johnny."

ever yr J.

337 *December 14th 1955*

We've had this morning such a heavenly letter from Augustus John who promises he'll come next summer to paint these Mountains, which we implored him to do. . . . It is his last & third drawing of me which we both like the best. . . .

His affection for Theodore is really a noteworthy thing & I
338 have told him I know well, & unhesitatingly always say, that Theodore is by far the most *original* of us all. . . .

Phyllis *is* better but by no means well. She tells me that these flu-colds with her invariably last 3 weeks. . . .

I am so delighted that you too had thought of Augustus John as *Jovian*. He sure is like that. I have begged him to get Gamel & Gerald, when he goes back to their neighbourhood in Spain, to lend him some book of Llewelyn's, for I have today written to him of Lulu's mania for Breughel's pictures which he mentions in this letter, and also Hieronymus Bosel (I can't spell these names!).

I told him he was one of the 3 great men I've met in my life, another being Charlie Chaplin, but the third at this actual moment I've entirely forgotten! That's where I am, to use the expression Hardy always used to me, "feeling my age"! And O of course! Hardy himself was my 3rd. Charlie C; Aug John; & T. Hardy. From Charlie C. I learnt to have some—clear, definite, & easily grasped by my will-power to follow—ideal of life for myself independent of everybody else.

From A.J. I've learnt to boldly follow that element in my nature which might be called babyish "innocence" (as he calls it) & "barbaric naïveté"—which is really a truer account of it —as you call it.

And from T. Hardy I learnt, long long ago, to see all human feelings, gestures, actions, & everything else!—my own & everybody's—against the Inanimate Background of Nature, whether flat or mountainous or moorish or swampy & marshy or of desert sand.

O I do so agree with you in your feeling for those words of Jesus when the sick woman had touched him & he felt that "Virtue" had gone out of him. I *must* look out that sentence in my Greek New Testament and see what word is used there for "Virtue".

And I do thank you for that Call to Arms to France versus the Hitler Occupation, by Aleister Crowley. I am glad you will let me keep it. Think of Augustus J. painting him at the end of his days—and much earlier. I always think of Crowley on a bus in New York when Padraic Colum warned me to beware! and
339 at my side at Foyle's Lunch when I treated him to his choice of a Bottle of wine & when he said that I was on the right track in making "Enjoyment" my ideal.

Jack. . . .

December 28th 1955

340 My dear! I can tell you this much about Last Night's Café Royal [*broadcast*] Stunt, namely that Phyllis swears, & I wholly & absolutely agree with her, that the most really humorous and witty & amusing thing in the whole Performance was said by you. This was when you told the story of Aleister being asked by a lady where she'd better send her daughter to school, & he replied: "To Radcliffe Hall".... And I felt very proud of your bold and challenging Defence of Aleister C. when you said he was much more than the dirty Devil he was by so many regarded as being. We were both of us struck by the resonance & power of your voice, like a Blackbird in an Ashtree.... I did like the idea of Augustus John wearing ear-rings!

I'll tell you now what I find very painful in the Daily Papers —Our war in Cyprus. Why the hell don't we clear out of Cyprus as we did out of the Sudan & the Nile and India? I keep reading in Homer about Aphrodite the Cyprian; O! I think we shall be getting into a row with Pallas Athene herself soon! Are we trying to conquer Olympus by "piling Pelion upon Ossa"? We shall get a licking "*from one who can lick you*", as old Littleton wrote in the Prep. once—to a boy who bullied me by hitting my nose with a billiard cue over and over again!

I love to see the two vols of Bewick's Birds in my shelf & to think how my father was always sending us to fetch it from his study to tell us about Birds, when the vignettes by Bewick in it are the most scandalous possible, some of them depicting Bestiality....

341 Phyllis and I say it is a triumph for us all for you to have collared such a Mona Lisa and Anais Nin as Joan be—in one lass, all combined!

Love from both,

your old Johnny.

I had never read this cheerful Christmas Carol of Ben Jonson before; & I certainly did enjoy both its Anastasian Monotheism as well as its Athanasian Trinitarianism. I value a Pot Pourri of Celebration!

May 2nd 1956

362 Yes, my dear, I can tell you for sure & certain & without the faintest or tiniest Doubt that this Photo I sent you was taken in *1935*—— For we came over [*from U.S.A.*] in 1934 and we stayed in Down Barn at East Chaldon and then in Dorchester, and only settled in Cae Coed, Corwen in the summer of 1935. "So that's certain", as that cross boy told his Roman Dad in the year One. . . .

I'm just like you, awfully pedantic & particular about tiny points of Grammar, and especially about points of punctuation which I was never properly taught at School: tho' why on earth I wasn't I can't think, for Blake & Kitty Blake at the Prep were particular, and "Old Wildy", i.e. William Beauchamp Wildman—who wrote the history of Sherborne &, with the help of Louis Napoleon Parker our Music Master, ran the Sherborne Pageant in the Castle Grounds which was the *First* of all the County & School Pageants that followed, all over these Isles—gave me a lasting respect for Greek Grammar. What we *do* owe to our School-Masters, and our Girls to their School Mistresses & Governesses! Our Marian of the Lace Shop & the Lace Book in New York* always has maintained that the Two most Important Things in the World are

1. Health
2. Education

She herself was educated at the High School in Norwich where she was a Day-Girl from our Aunt's house in the Close.

What is the important thing in education is only to teach what thrills you yourself! *All* kids, from Babies & Toddlers to Boys at School, are terribly discerning! Yes, children see & know always infinitely more than the grown-up people with them think they do. They don't *comment* on all this detail because it doesn't interest them & they are absorbed in their own interests; but they detect everything. O how I long to show you & Joan the groups of Toddlers—all about two &
363 three—I observe from my upper window! Wales is the Paradise of children as America is of young girls and England of Old Gentlemen! And Blaenau (We or I pronounce it "Bliney") is the most paradisical place in Wales for Babies & Toddlers up to 4 & 5. They *never* quarrel. That is literally true. And they very very very rarely cry! They have no reason to. If one does, all the others surround it in a moment, anxiously concerned and horrified, and proceed to comfort it in ways beyond the knowledge of any imaginable Nanny—— But after the Babies the Sheep & Lambs walking everywhere is the Wonder.

* His sister Marian, Mrs. Grey, was the foremost authority on lace in U.S.A. She valued lace for the United States Customs.

And after the Babies & the Sheep & Lambs—the Third Wonder (the Fourth is the Weather and our Mountains the Moelwyns) is the real super-super-Welsh Aristocracy of Blaenau. We'll take you to see them, for their house with trees round it is within 3 minutes walk of us. . . . His name is John Vaughan &.from father to son they've lived in the same house for 400 if not 500 years. . . . His sister Verna Vaughan, such a competent girl with the strongest feminine arms I've ever seen, humours us and her brother and everybody she meets, like a veritable Gargamelle. If she meets Phyllis shopping on the street she snatches from her whatever she's carrying & carries it for her—— They are the original Mabiniogion Vaughans which used to be *Fychan* which is Welsh for Little or Small. The real word in any Welsh Dictionary if you looked it up would be *Bychan*, but according to this mad method of what they call "Mutations"—or in Welsh "Treigliadan" which means altering the initial consonants to make the sentence sound more musical—"Bychan" turns into "Fychan", and "Vaughan" is our English version which we have forced on the Welsh for "Fychan" which means, among their old kings, "the son or the little heir", as "Owen Mawr, Owen the Great" and "Owen Fychan, his son & heir".

I saw "the Bird Man" [*the Lord Lilford who was an authority on Birds*]—who introduced "the Little Owl" into the British Isles—once when I was with my father fishing, but he didn't see us and we went on to the church called Achurch where the Birdman's father has a monument with a long poem by Matthew Prior who wrote that line about some bare girl—"lest you" or "take care" or "beware of touching the feather", and 364
where our uncle Littleton has a monument. It must have been the Birdman's son Stephen Powys who sent me that money for Warwick—it was Stephen with whom Lulu & Alyse once had tea in London and who became the lord after the death of, I think, his brother. . . .

I was just accepted as mad at Sherborne and just let off Gym and the "Bath" etc etc—— How was it that nobody wrote to my Father in Dorchester to say "I regret to inform you that your eldest son has gone mad"? Jesus Holy! but that Crowley-loving kid aged 15 is a person!

Think of St Aldhem being the Founder, before Rex Edwardus Sextus, of Sherborne School, and also being the same person as St *Alban's* Head. I've no doubt he lay between those two girls to just test himself but it was cunning of him because of course "three's no company".

By the way do read, if you see it in your Travelling Library, 'The Hosanna Man' by Phil Callow whose circle of working-class artists & writers in Coventry we have corresponded with for a long time, & we have met the Hosanna Man himself.

We learn that on Tuesday the 19th of June or "round the 19th" Malcolm Elwin & Eve may be visiting us here. We look forward to the end of June for you two.

your old John, & we both embrace Joan.

375 Phyllis was so very pleased, my dear, with your discriminations of the Wines & of the differences between them. She gave some glasses (more than one) to Elbert Anderson who lives in Borneo & is very powerfully built. . . .

O Phyllis says she would indeed greatly like to read the book you speak of ['Heyday of a Wizard' *by Jean Burton*] about Mr Home the Medium. I remember reading about him long long ago & I shall be thrilled to hear extracts from Phyllis's readings of this book. By the way I see an announcement of a book by Somerset Maugham called 'The Magician', about Aleister Crowley. Phyllis begs you to get out of the Library a book that pleases her very especially, namely Jean Burton's 'Sir Richard Burton's Wife' . . . . Phyllis thinks she's no relation, any more than Evelyn Hardy is of T. Hardy. Phyllis says that she gets more advantage, much more, by the way books circle round between you & us & Alyse than she could get from any Library! She says it is a sort of private Circulation Club.

We are both busy busy busy busy now because I have the Proof of 'The Brazen Head', my Roger Bacon book—did you

376 know he came from Ilchester, otherwise Iscala, only 4 or 5 miles from Montacute where we used to go to skate on the floods?—and Phyllis has the Proof of old Littleton's "Still the Joy of it' which is all about Elizabeth Myers, as the first vol [*The Joy of it*] was about Mabel Bennett [*Littleton Powys's second and first wives*]. Neither of us ever saw Elizabeth Myers.

Gilbert [*Turner*] has been here. He is at Bala now. He described to us his holiday in Corsica, with a huge lot of snapshots to illustrate his adventure. They drink wine like water there. You go to a Café and they put an open bottle before you and you finish it & they take it out & refill it & you finish it again —& so on—— They have an amazing *aperitif* there called "Cap Cors" which Gilbert swears is the nicest & most stimulating of all drinks. . . . When the islanders go to France they call it "going to the Continent". They don't like to say "going to France" because they *are* France. That's what Master Mintoff wants Malta to be—a Little England!

Gilbert has a real genius for detecting good Pictures. He went into a shop—saw a picture—bought it for two pounds—& the British Museum man would have given him fifty pounds for it, but in place of selling it he has hung it over his mantelpiece!

Both to both—your old Jack.